Appropriations Committee

Budget Public Hearing- Higher Education -University of Connecticut

February 15, 2023

Public Hearing Testimony on HB 6659: An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

Testimony of

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Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Ranking Members Senator Berthel and Representative Nuccio, Higher Education Subcommittee Chairs Flexer and Haddad, and honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee: I testify today on behalf of the leadership team of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Connecticut. Our department is facing a resource crisis that leads us to be extremely concerned about the effect of the proposed budget on our ability to educate the next generation of computer scientists, data scientists, and computer engineers. As we comprise over half of UConn's School of Engineering in terms of undergraduate enrollment, our story is a good proxy for the circumstances of the entire School.

Undergraduate demand for UConn computing degrees is steadily increasing: in the last year alone we saw a 25% increase in applications. While this has naturally led to larger enrollment, we are conspicuously unable to meet the demands of Connecticut's computing industry: indeed, our seniors receive an average of 4.7 job offers prior to graduation. Even with our current resources we are struggling to provide appropriate class sizes and effective student support for our current undergraduate population: the student-faculty ratio of our department is over 30, while typical peer departments at other state universities operate well below 20. Without significant new resources, it is certain that our department—and the School of Engineering more broadly—will be turning away increasing numbers of qualified undergraduates, master's students, and Ph.D. students every semester. Many of these students will seek affordable education elsewhere, taking their talents out of state and out of reach of Connecticut industry.

As computing is so critical for Connecticut's economy and our engineers are in such high demand across the state, this is a time for the State to redouble its leveraged financial commitment to affordable, quality education at UConn.